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Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

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Report of the Secretary-General

I. Introduction

1. On 7 December 1998, the General Assembly adopted, without a vote, resolution 53/85 on cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In that resolution, the Assembly acknowledged the increasing contribution of OSCE to the establishment and maintenance of international peace and security in its region. This contribution encompassed activities in early warning and preventive diplomacy, including the activities of the High Commissioner on National Minorities (HCNM) of OSCE, crisis management and post-conflict rehabilitation, as well as arms control and disarmament. The Assembly noted with appreciation the further improvement of cooperation and coordination between the United Nations and OSCE and requested me to continue exploring with the Chairman-in-Office and the Secretary-General of OSCE possibilities for further enhancement of cooperation, information exchange and coordination.

2. In the same resolution, the General Assembly decided to include in the provisional agenda of its fifty-fourth session the item entitled "Cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe" and requested me to submit to it at that session a report on cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE in the implementation of the resolution. The present report is submitted pursuant to that request.

II. Measures of cooperation between the United Nations and the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe

3. At the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe, held at Helsinki in 1992, the heads of State or Government of the participating States declared that the Conference was a regional arrangement in the sense of Chapter VIII of the Charter of the United Nations. In resolution 48/5 of 13 October 1993, the General Assembly decided to invite the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe (CSCE)[1] to participate in the work of the Assembly as an observer.

4. On 26 May 1993, letters were exchanged between the Secretary-General of the United Nations and the Chairman-in-Office of the Council of CSCE (see A/48/185, annexes I and II). By those letters, the signatories accepted the arrangements described in the framework for cooperation and coordination between the two organizations (A/48/185, annex II, appendix).

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5. The observer status of OSCE and the framework referred to above constitute the institutional parameters of cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE.

6. As noted in previous reports on cooperation and coordination with OSCE (A/48/549, A/49/529, A/50/564, A/51/489 and Add.1, A/52/450 and A/53/672), good contacts have been established and maintained with the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE. During the past year, I met with the Chairman-in-Office on a number of occasions. I also met with the Secretary-General of OSCE, and OSCE representatives held meetings with United Nations officials on a regular basis at United Nations Headquarters, at the United Nations Office at Geneva and at OSCE headquarters in Vienna. The Director-General of the United Nations Office at Geneva was invited to speak before the Permanent Council in November 1998. On 12 February 1999, the Council of Europe, OSCE and the United Nations held their annual tripartite meeting at Strasbourg and reviewed issues of their cooperation. I addressed the Permanent Council on 20 July 1999 and have been invited to attend and address the meeting of heads of State and Government of the States members of the organization, at Istanbul on 18 and 19 November 1999. In October 1999, the Deputy Secretary-General visited OSCE headquarters for talks with the organization's officials and spoke before the Permanent Council.

7. As a follow-up to the third meeting of the heads of regional organizations devoted to conflict prevention, a working level meeting between the regional organizations and the United Nations on the theme of cooperation for conflict prevention, in which an OSCE representative participated, was held in New York in December 1998. Its purpose was to work towards establishing specific modalities for early warning and conflict prevention.

8. Cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE takes place on a multitude of levels. Together, the two organizations continue to face humanitarian and political challenges in the Balkans and in some countries of the former Soviet Union. The challenges of the new century will require the organizations to work even harder to enhance their capabilities to further the realization of democracy and respect for human rights.

9. During the past year, cooperation between the United Nations and OSCE in the field has intensified. In view of the limited financial material and human resources made available by Member States, the United Nations and OSCE continued to practice a division of labour based on the comparative advantages of the two organizations. The United Nations has retained the lead in peacemaking efforts in Abkhazia, Georgia, and Tajikistan, while OSCE has retained the lead in the Republic of Moldova and South Ossetia, Georgia, and in the resolution of the conflict over the Nagorny Karabakh region of Azerbaijan. Specific efforts have been made to improve consultation and cooperation in the field and between the respective headquarters. These steps have resulted in enhanced coordination that makes better use of the resources of the international community in the interests of the countries being assisted.

10. In recent years, the relationship of the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) with OSCE has developed into a comprehensive strategic partnership. The cooperation framework, based on interaction between two mutually reinforcing institutions, centres on the prevention of mass displacement, a recognition of the critical link between displacement and security issues and the need to address the humanitarian dimension of conflict resolution processes.

11. Frequent consultations took place, particularly with the Chairman-in-Office, to share information and ensure coherence and complementarity of action. In December 1998, the High Commissioner was invited for the first time to attend a "troika" meeting addressing a broad range of issues of common concern. This was followed, in January 1999, by a series of meetings with the Chairman-in-Office and his representatives. In June 1999, the High Commissioner was for the first time requested to join the Chairman-in-Office on his visit to Central Asia.

12. During the past 12 months, the High Commissioner and the Assistant High Commissioner addressed the Permanent Council of OSCE on three separate occasions. Additional briefings were provided on the follow-up to the recent conference of the Commonwealth of Independent States (CIS). UNHCR officials also attended and made written and oral contributions to the meeting of the Reinforced Permanent Council on the conflicts in Georgia and the Republic of Moldova in October 1998 and the United Nations/OSCE meeting on the platform for cooperative security.

13. UNHCR is an active participant in the Implementation Meetings on the Human Dimension of the Office for Democratic Institutions and Human Rights (ODIHR), which cover a broad range of issues directly relevant to the Office. Cooperation with HCNM has also been institutionalized and covers an ever larger range of topics. It centres mainly on issues of citizenship and statelessness; the formerly deported peoples in Crimea, Ukraine; the problems faced by Meshketian Turks, another category of formerly deported peoples; and ethnic tolerance in Central Asia.

14. As a follow-up to the Regional Conference to Address the Problems of Refugees, Displaced Persons, Other Forms of Involuntary Displacement and Returnees in the Countries of the Commonwealth of Independent States and Relevant Neighbouring States, UNHCR, together with the International Organization for Migration (IOM) and ODIHR, organized an annual steering group meeting in June 1999 to review the progress made in the implementation of the Programme of Action adopted by the Conference.

15. Two international meetings sponsored by HCNM, UNHCR and the Open Society Institute were held in 1998 and 1999 to address problems faced by Meshketian Turks. Significant progress has been made towards developing a comprehensive approach to the issue with the participation of all concerned countries (Azerbaijan, Georgia, Russian Federation, Turkey and Uzbekistan).

16. The Economic Commission for Europe (ECE) continues its commitment to strengthening cooperation with OSCE. During the seventh Economic Forum of OSCE, held at Prague from 25 to 28 May 1999, ECE contributed to the debate on the economic situation and reforms in States members of OSCE, on energy and environment, environmental security and public participation. ECE officials and regional advisers participated in seminars and conferences on regional environmental problems and energy organized by OSCE. In order to facilitate the process of the preparation of an OSCE charter on European security, ECE organized, on 11 November 1998, a brainstorming seminar on the economic dimension of security.

17. A new area for potential cooperation is emerging through the development of the United Nations special programme for the economies of Central Asia, in which ECE and the Economic and Social Commission for Asia and the Pacific (ESCAP) play the leading role. ECE informed OSCE about the development of the special programme during consultations held at Vienna on 15 March 1999 on a coordinated approach to activities in Central Asia.

18. Cooperation continued during the past year between the United Nations Development Programme (UNDP) and OSCE institutions at headquarters and at the field level. The cooperation included exchange of expertise and participation in a multitude of meetings hosted by both organizations.

19. UNDP participated in a conference organized by HCNM and ODIHR at Locarno, Switzerland from 18 to 20 October 1998. The subject of the conference was "Governance and participation: integrating diversity". The UNDP presentation emphasized the organization's role in governance, human rights and decentralization, with general reference to activities related to minority issues.

20. UNDP works closely with ODIHR in the area of human rights. A UNDP focal point for those activities was established in the UNDP country office in Warsaw in 1997. The UNDP focal point coordinates activities in support of democracy, good governance and participation with OSCE and ODIHR, with special attention to the Central Asian States and Estonia, Georgia and Ukraine.

21. Additional cooperation with OSCE took place within the framework of the commemoration of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights. The culmination of the commemoration in the region was a landmark conference in the historic setting of Yalta, Ukraine.

22. Partnership framework agreements were developed further during the past year between UNDP and HCNM. High-level meetings between HCNM and relevant UNDP bureaux and divisions in April 1999 established a framework for close cooperation, with the nomination of focal points in each office.

23. As far as the cooperation between UNDP and OSCE in the field, one of the most recent examples is the interaction on human rights in Crimea, Ukraine, which focuses specifically on formerly deported people. As part of the capacity-building activities of the newly established ombudsman office in Ukraine, a joint OSCE-UNDP appeal in 1998 raised US$ 57,000 from the local donor community to meet the urgent needs of the office.

24. Building on the positive experience of the past few years, the United Nations Mission in Bosnia and Herzegovina (UNMIBH) and OSCE worked together extensively in the field of human rights. In particular, a pilot project to host a "property clinic" run by OSCE at the International Police Task Force (IPTF) stations in Kula and Novo Sarajevo promoted a coordinated, effective response for pre-war property owners wishing to regain access to their property. The initiative is likely to be extended to other IPTF stations. A recent initiative to promote more active police participation in lawful evictions has been conducted jointly with OSCE, with the latter's field officers utilizing the non-compliance procedures of IPTF to promote more vigorous enforcement of the law. UNMIBH and OSCE have also cooperated in media-related matters.

25. In Bosnia and Herzegovina, UNHCR and OSCE have cooperated actively in the return of displaced persons and refugees. OSCE has developed a support plan for the Return and Reconstruction Task Force led by the Office of the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and UNHCR. UNHCR also participated in various committees under the chairmanship of OSCE overseeing the implementation of the results of the municipal elections held

in September 1998. In February 1999, UNHCR, UNMIBH, OSCE and the European Commission Monitoring Mission (ECMM) signed an inter-agency memorandum of understanding on a returnee monitoring framework for Bosnia and Herzegovina to address the issue of national protection extended to returnees and displaced persons.

26. Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina offer good examples of partnerships in the field aimed at fostering conditions conducive to return. UNHCR and OSCE have cooperated on various levels towards the main objective of promoting and facilitating voluntary return, with UNHCR focusing on humanitarian activities and OSCE focusing on monitoring elections, human rights and compliance with return agreements.

27. There has been close cooperation between UNHCR and OSCE with regard to cross-border returns of refugees from Croatia and Bosnia and Herzegovina (in particular Republika Srpska). In Croatia, OSCE has been able to use its influence to ensure that the return agreements are adhered to. In addition, it has taken the lead, along with UNHCR and ECMM, in establishing a common database to track progress in the return of refugees. UNHCR and OSCE share the chairmanship of the Return Facilitation Group, which oversees efforts to promote returns from the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

28. While organizing and monitoring the 1998 elections in Bosnia and Herzegovina, OSCE and UNHCR cooperated in promoting the participation of refugees in the process. In the context of those elections, OSCE and IOM concluded a memorandum of understanding, which entrusted IOM, as in previous elections, with the registration and polling operations for Bosnians living outside Bosnia and Herzegovina. Likewise, in the context of the subsequent municipal elections, OSCE and IOM concluded in 1999 a memorandum of understanding governing the advisory and operational role of IOM with regard to Bosnians living abroad.

29. As part of the continuing efforts aimed at achieving a comprehensive political settlement of the conflict in Abkhazia, Georgia, representatives of OSCE participate in the sessions of the Coordinating Council. This mechanism, which is under the framework of the Geneva peace process led by the United Nations, is convened, in accordance with its statutes, not less than once every two months. Cooperation also includes frequent exchanges of information on developments in the mission area between my Special Representative for Georgia and the OSCE Head of Mission. At the invitation of the Chairman of the Permanent Council of OSCE, my Special Representative addressed the Reinforced Permanent Council in Vienna on 23 October 1998. Furthermore, in accordance with the memorandum of understanding signed between the United Nations High Commissioner for Human Rights and OSCE, the latter has assigned its representative to the United Nations Human Rights Office in Abkhazia, Georgia, to work closely with United Nations staff members. Representatives of the OSCE mission in Georgia participate in the monthly donor coordination meetings organized by the offices of the World Bank and UNDP in Tblisi.

30. Meanwhile, OSCE and UNHCR field missions in Georgia continue to practice a division of labour that has proved effective in the context of efforts to achieve a peaceful solution to the South Ossetia conflict. Within the framework of the Joint Control Commission, the missions have worked to promote solutions to the displacement problem and to build confidence between the parties. Joint efforts also include the development of a judicial and legal process aimed at the return of property to returnees and the formulation of a legislative framework to address a possible return of Meshketian Turks.

31. The United Nations Mission of Observers in Tajikistan (UNMOT) has maintained close liaison with OSCE since the Mission was established as a peacekeeping operation in December 1994. My Special Representative for Tajikistan is the Coordinator of the Contact Group of Guarantor States and International Organizations, established under the General Agreement on the Establishment of Peace and National Accord between the Government of Tajikistan and the United Tajik Opposition of 27 June 1997. OSCE is a member of the Contact Group and works closely with UNMOT on matters of mutual concern related to the peace process, concentrating on issues of human rights, democratic institution-building and the protection of returnees. The United Nations and OSCE are requested, under the General Agreement, to provide support to the parliamentary elections to be held in Tajikistan at the end of the transition period. The two organizations have agreed to coordinate fully and combine their efforts in this regard. The United Nations and ODIHR undertook two joint electoral technical assessment missions to Tajikistan to study the possibilities of international assistance to the parliamentary elections to be held in February 2000.

32. In its resolution 1244 (1999) of 10 June 1999, the Security Council authorized me, with the assistance of relevant international organizations, to establish an international civil presence in Kosovo in order to provide [illegible]terim administration for Kosovo. As this task required [illegible]rated approach with a clear distribution of labour, [illegible]v. Louise Fréchette, met with representatives of

the Chairman-in-Office of OSCE on 15 June 1999 to discuss an allocation of responsibilities in Kosovo between the United Nations and OSCE. It was agreed that OSCE would take the lead role in institution-building in Kosovo and in the creation of institutions of democracy, pluralism, human rights and the rule of law.

33. The cooperation established between OSCE and the United Nations in Kosovo and elsewhere in the Balkans bears testimony to the complementarity of the two organizations and the many advantages that stand to be gained from a rational division of labour based on their respective strengths. As a result, both organizations have derived valuable practical experience of cooperation and burden-sharing in a variety of fields. This experience, I am sure, can be usefully applied in future undertakings where the United Nations is working side by side with one or several regional organizations.

Notes

[1] At the Summit conference of heads of State and Government of the participating States of CSCE, held at Budapest on 5 and 6 December 1994, it was agreed to change the name of the Conference on Security and Cooperation in Europe to the Organization for Security and Cooperation in Europe, effective 1 January 1995 (see A/49/800-S/1994/1435).